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Canadian Unity
Information Office

Centre d'information
sur l'unité canadienne

The Government of Canada

and

the consumer

The Government of Canada offers a wide variety of programs designed to serve all Canadians. This booklet describes those intended especially for consumers.

This is one of a series of booklets on federal programs and services. To obtain others in the series, please refer to the listing and order form at the back of this publication.

Note: This publication is also available in French

Note: Cette brochure est également disponible en français

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The Consumer

We all have one thing in common. We're consumers, obtaining from others such daily needs as food, clothing and services. When Canada was largely a rural society, consumers knew who was responsible for the goods they bought. But today the marketplace is larger and far more complex. That is why many federal departments have developed legislation designed to protect buyers in the marketplace. These laws have been developed to protect you from being harmed or misled, and also to uphold your right to know exactly what you are buying, the right to choose what you want, the right to complain if you are not satisfied, and the right to products that will not harm you.

Laws that protect you

At the supermarket

The food you buy has come under scrutiny according to federal laws administered by a number of Government of Canada departments. **Agriculture Canada, Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans, and Health and Welfare**, for example, carry out tests to ensure the quality of agricultural products, fish, butter, cheese, skim milk powder, eggs, fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, honey, maple syrup, meat and poultry.

The stamp "Canada A" or "Canada Utility" on the package or product indicates that the food is graded and packed in Canada in grade standards, so sellers do not misrepresent the products. The designation "Canada A"



indicates superior quality. "Canada Approved" on a meat label certifies that the product has been checked by a meat inspector from Agriculture Canada and found to be safe and wholesome. A "best before" date must appear on most packaged foods that are to be used within 90 days or less. Also, storage instructions should indicate if products are to be stored at other than room temperature. "Previously frozen" must appear on products if they have been thawed before being offered for sale.

Labels also carry other information, such as the list of major ingredients in order of quantity from greatest to least, the size of each serving, and the name and address of the manufacturer or distributor.

If artificial flavouring, vitamins or minerals have been added, the label must say so. No new additives can be used in food until they have been thoroughly checked for safety by the Canadian government. Similarly, new pesticides have to be checked before they may be used on food crops.

Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada also plays an important role in the inspection of products to ensure quality, and it also checks advertisements to make certain that what is offered for sale is in fact available to buyers.

In the home

Consumer and Corporate Affairs has designed four hazard symbols to be used on product packaging, whenever they apply. These symbols are — **poison** — **flammable** — **explosive** — **corrosive**. The federal government has also ruled that many dangerous products must be packaged in child-proof containers.

Consumer and Corporate Affairs laboratories test some 2,500 household products a year to ensure that they meet the standards and safety regulations of the *Hazardous Products Act*, which also sets minimum fire-resistance requirements for all textile products, such as carpets, upholstery and clothing.

When preparing meals

The gas or electricity you use for cooking is measured by meters that fall under federal regulations and ensure that your utility bills are correct.

If you think you are being overcharged, contact the nearest Consumer and Corporate Affairs office and a government inspector will make an independent test of your meter.

Health and Welfare Canada has set standards for microwave ovens, and carries out regular checks in the marketplace.

At the drugstore

The federal government ensures that drugs are safe by requiring manufacturers to obtain permits for sale after adequate testing has been done. Canadian government specialists check manufacturers' test results before permits are issued.

Medical devices such as heart pacemakers are also regulated by Health and Welfare Canada for public safety.

When buying drugs or vitamins, consumers should check for the expiry date, read any warning labels, and ask for child-proof containers.

When buying clothes

The federal government works in a number of ways to ensure that consumers know what they are getting when buying clothes, and how to take care of them afterward.

By requiring that the correct generic descriptions of fibres be attached to textiles and clothing, the federal government helps you determine whether you are getting good value, and makes it possible for you to avoid fibres to which you may be allergic.

To help you care properly for your clothes, five labels have been developed under the federal government's

voluntary labelling program, indicating appropriate laundry care.

The Government of Canada has also made sure that labels on children's clothing indicate size by age or weight.

In the business world

To ensure competition in the business world, Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada continually examines business practices. The department regulates the insolvency process and investigates irregularities in bankruptcies.

Banks and other financial institutions must operate under the regulations of the *Bank Act*, to ensure that they remain stable and solvent.

Anti-competitive trade practices that might be detrimental to the public's interest are prohibited by the *Com-bines Investigation Act*.

Advertising is monitored by the department to ensure that it is not deliberately or accidentally misleading.

If you feel that you have been misled by an advertisement, you should make your complaint known to the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Buying on credit

Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada is working to protect consumers from exploitation by money lenders. For example, you may be obliged to pay even if the seller defaults. So, when making major purchases through a promissory note or post-dated cheque, as a precaution you should write "consumer purchase" clearly on the note.

In your car

You can save money and help conserve energy by driving a fuel-efficient vehicle. The way you drive also affects

mileage, and so does maintaining your car according to the manufacturer's instructions. Note that rapid acceleration and high speed burn more fuel. Most cars use about 20 per cent less fuel if they are driven at 90 instead of 100 kilometres per hour.

Most manufacturers are attaching labels to new vehicles that show three applicable fuel consumption numbers: city, highway and the comparative rating.

Laws also exist to ensure that you are getting the amount of fuel you pay for. Federal inspectors do periodic checks of measuring devices on service station pumps.

To obtain more information on vehicle fuel economy, the *Fuel Consumption Guide* is available by writing to:

Public Affairs Branch
Transport Canada
21st Floor, Tower C
Transport Canada Building
Place de Ville
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N5

Available help

If you run into problems in your daily business dealings:

- Complain first to the retailer. Be sure to bring your proof of purchase and state clearly your reasons for dissatisfaction.
- If this does not result in the problem being solved to your satisfaction, put in writing the reason for your complaint and what you've done about it. Send this letter to the manufacturer or the head office.
- If you are still not satisfied, send a copy of your letter to one or more of the voluntary provincial or national consumer agencies across Canada.
- Inform the local Better Business Bureau.



Neighbourhood consumer help offices are located in 16 communities across Canada. They are funded by Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada in co-operation with local community groups.

Protecting yourself

As a consumer you have certain rights, but coupled with these rights is the responsibility to protect yourself. You can do this by:

- learning everything you can about what you are buying
- carrying out your transactions in a business-like way
- letting other consumers know when you have been treated unfairly
- reporting unsafe merchandise to Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada.

Remember also to:

- read labels and follow instructions
- get guarantees in writing
- save receipts
- ask questions about a product or service before you pay
- understand the terms of the sale.

For more information

To contact Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada consult your telephone directory for the offices of Consumer and Corporate Affairs under the general heading of **Government of Canada**. There are offices in the following communities:

Pacific Region

Vancouver, Kelowna, Prince George, Victoria, Nelson.

Prairie Region

Winnipeg, Brandon, Regina, Saskatoon, Yorkton, Prince Albert, Calgary, Lethbridge, Edmonton.

Ontario Region

Toronto, Willowdale, St. Catharines, Belleville, Hamilton, London, Ottawa, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Windsor.

Quebec Region

Montreal, Chicoutimi, Hull, Quebec, Sherbrooke, Trois-Rivières, Rimouski.

Atlantic Region

Halifax, Dartmouth, Truro, Sydney, Charlottetown, Fredericton, Saint John, Moncton, Corner Brook, St. John's.

Saving energy in your home

Effective home energy planning is necessary to understand how energy is being used, and how to reduce your home's energy consumption. **Energy, Mines and Resources (EMR)** has four home energy programs and services that could help you to reduce your energy costs.

Energy, Mines and Resources, through its **EnerSave** home energy analysis, is encouraging Canadians to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. After the



homeowner completes a questionnaire, Ener\$ave carries out a free computerized analysis of the insulation and air sealing requirements, along with a cost-benefit analysis of the recommendations.

EMR also operates the **Heatline**. This toll-free telephone service answers questions about heating systems and energy conservation.

For the free Ener\$ave computerized home energy analysis, or for advice on home energy conservation, call the toll-free Heatline number for your area.

British Columbia residents call:	112-800-267-9563
Yukon and Northwest Territories residents call collect:	(613) 995-1801
Ottawa-Hull residents call:	(613) 995-1801
Residents of all other regions call toll free:	1-800-267-9563

Or you may write to:

Ener\$ave
580 Booth Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0E4

The **Canadian Home Insulation Program (CHIP)** provides financial assistance to improve insulation in qualifying homes. For information on this program, or for a *CHIP Applicant's Guide* and an application form, call the number for your area, before insulation work is started. Toll-free numbers are provided for use outside local dialing areas.

CHIP Regional Offices

Newfoundland and Labrador

St. John's: 772-5353
Happy Valley, Goose Bay: 896-2997
Corner Brook: 639-1658
Windsor: 489-9022
Toll free: Zenith 07792

Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

Halifax: 453-2421
Toll free: 1-800-565-7627

New Brunswick

Fredericton: 452-3756
Toll free: 1-800-442-9771

Quebec

Montreal: 341-7105
Toll free: 1-800-361-6860

Ontario

Toronto: 789-0581
Toll free: 1-800-268-1818
except area code 807: (416) 789-0581 (collect)

Manitoba

Winnipeg: 949-5695
Toll free: 1-800-362-3346

Saskatchewan

Regina: 359-6164

Toll free: 1-800-667-3573

Alberta

Edmonton: 420-2459

Toll free: 1-800-232-9492

British Columbia

Vancouver: 666-2717

Toll free: 112-800-663-9529

Northwest Territories: (403) 420-2459 (collect)

Yukon: (604) 666-2717 (collect)

There is also the **Canada Oil Substitution Program (COSP)** under which financial assistance is available for homeowners to convert their heating systems from oil to other domestic energy sources. In Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, the Yukon and Northwest Territories, some conservation measures also qualify for COSP grants.

When considering alternative energy sources for heating, contact your Energy, Mines and Resources regional office to be sure of the alternatives that are available and eligible under COSP. If you plan to convert to gas or electricity, contact your local utility about the program, and for a grant application form. When considering converting to a renewable energy source such as wood or solar energy, or to propane, call your Energy, Mines and Resources regional office for information and for an application form. Toll-free numbers are provided for use outside local dialing areas.

Regional COSP Offices

Newfoundland and Labrador

St. John's: 772-5353

Toll free: Zenith 07792

Prince Edward Island

Summerside: 436-7283

Toll free: Zenith 07792

Nova Scotia

Halifax: 426-8600

Toll free: 1-426-8600

New Brunswick

Dieppe, Moncton: 388-6070

Toll free: 1-800-332-3908

Quebec

Montreal: 283-5632

Toll free: 1-800-361-8025

Ontario

Toronto: 252-5866

Toll free: 1-800-268-2207

Manitoba

Winnipeg: 949-4266

Toll free: 1-800-542-8928

Saskatchewan

Saskatoon: 665-4532

Toll free: 1-800-667-9719

Alberta

St. Albert, Edmonton: 420-4085

Toll free: 1-800-222-6477

British Columbia

Vancouver, Burnaby, lower mainland: 524-7222
Toll free: 112-800-663-1280

Northwest Territories

Yellowknife: 920-8475
Toll free: Zenith 2828

Yukon

Whitehorse: 668-2828
Toll free: Zenith 2828

For additional information on saving energy, the following books are available either by writing to the addresses below, or by calling the Heatline.

- *The Billpayers Guide to Heating Systems*
- *Keeping the Heat in*

To receive copies write to:
Conservation Books
P.O. Box 3500, Station C
Ottawa, Ontario
K1Y 4G1

There is also available a series of consumer-oriented fact sheets, called *Enerfacts*. To receive a list of available *Enerfacts* write to:

Home Energy Program Division — ECOSP
Energy, Mines and Resources Canada
580 Booth Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0E4



The following publications describing federal programs and services are available free of charge. Should you wish to receive any or all of these publications please complete the order form.

Should you require more than one of these items, please write a brief letter explaining how they will be distributed and to whom.

- ☐ 300-E The Government of Canada at your service
- ☐ 301-E The Government of Canada and the working person
- ☐ 302-E The Government of Canada and the consumer
- ☐ 303-E The Government of Canada and world affairs
- ☐ 304-E The Government of Canada and the small business

- ☐ 305-E The Government of Canada and the senior citizen
- ☐ 308-E The Government of Canada and youth
- ☐ 309-E The Government of Canada and agriculture
- ☐ 310-E The Government of Canada and women
- ☐ 321-E The Government of Canada and the construction industry

PLEASE USE BLOCK LETTERS

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

PROVINCE

POSTAL CODE

IMPORTANT

Mail this coupon to the appropriate address in the province in which you live. See the inside back cover for addresses.

Les publications suivantes sur les programmes et les services offerts par le gouvernement fédéral sont disponibles gratuitement. Pour les obtenir, il vous suffit de remplir le bulletin de commande.

- ☐ 300-F Le gouvernement du Canada à votre service
- ☐ 301-F Le gouvernement du Canada et le travailleur
- ☐ 302-F Le gouvernement du Canada et le consommateur
- ☐ 303-F Le gouvernement du Canada et les relations internationales
- ☐ 304-F Le gouvernement du Canada et les petites entreprises

Si vous désirez recevoir plus d'un exemplaire, prière d'en indiquer la raison dans une courte lettre.

- ☐ 305-F Le gouvernement du Canada et le troisième âge
- ☐ 308-F Le gouvernement du Canada et la jeunesse
- ☐ 309-F Le gouvernement du Canada et l'agriculture
- ☐ 310-F Le gouvernement du Canada et la femme
- ☐ 321-F Le gouvernement du Canada et l'industrie de la construction

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VILLE

PROVINCE

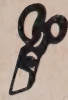
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IMPORTANT

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(See reverse side for ordering booklets in English)

**Veillez retourner ce bulletin
à l'adresse postale de la province
où vous habitez. Vous trouverez
ces adresses à la fin de
la brochure.**



CANADIAN UNITY INFORMATION OFFICE POST OFFICE BOXES

NEWFOUNDLAND

Publications Canada
P.O. Box 12066
Postal Station A
St. John's, Nfld.
A1B 3T5

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Publications Canada
P.O. Box 17000
Charlottetown, P.E.I.
C1A 8S7

NOVA SCOTIA

Publications Canada
P.O. Box 9308
Postal Station A
Halifax, N.S.
B3K 5N5

NEW BRUNSWICK

Publications Canada
P.O. Box 1981
Postal Station A
Fredericton, N.B.
E3B 5G4

QUEBEC

Publications Canada
C.P. 430
Succursale de Lorimier
Montréal (Québec)
H2H 2N7

ONTARIO

Publications Canada
P.O. Box 1986
Postal Station B
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 6G6

MANITOBA

Publications Canada
P.O. Box 368
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 2H6

SASKATCHEWAN

Publications Canada
P.O. Box 4554
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 3Y3

ALBERTA

Publications Canada
P.O. Box 1990
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 2P3

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Publications Canada
P.O. Box 7800
Vancouver, B.C.
V6B 4E7



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